



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 7. Issue.4. 2020 (Oct-Dec)

ISSN
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

Literature of Obscenities in Women's Writings between Sexuality and Pornography:
Salwa al-Nu'aymī's ¹ Novel of *Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of the Honey* as a Sample

Dr. HANAN BISHARA

The Academic Arab College for Education in Israel – Haifa
Email:hanan-b10@bezeqint.net



Article information

Received:11/10/2020
Accepted: 25/11/2020
Published online: 02/12/2020
doi: [10.33329/ijelr.7.4.135](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.7.4.135)

ABSTRACT

Acquaintance with the woman's body and the attempts to discover it are as old as humanity, but the masculine vision dominated the aspects of the human culture and subjugated them to its rules. The woman has been present in the inherited texts as an alternate to defect, sin, and taboos, which led her image to appear in the literary texts as a receiver of actions rather than an active doer.

The term of "Writing the Body" appeared to refer to the woman's writing that stems from the body. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva in her book *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). Afterwards, the body turned in feminist culture into a symbol of the woman's awareness of herself, her desire to be independent, and her resistance of the oppressive authorities through history, which turned it into a focus of creativity in modern times.

The 'body' in the woman's writing is present in order to denounce the man's oppression of the woman, and this led to focusing on feminist writings. The woman stood in her ideological discourse against the man, and the woman's creativity started betting on uncovering the practices that are exerted on the woman's body, or exposing the reduction of the woman into a 'body', or even destroying the idea of shackling the woman's body and convicting it versus that freedom which is given to the man in order to express what he feels and desires from the woman's body.

A number of novels that appeared in this genre in the Arab world focused on the woman's body and her senses. Among these novels is one by the Syrian writer, Salwa al Nu'aymī, called: *Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of the Honey* (2007). This novel is considered a new step on the road of the culture of the body and senses. The novel's main bet was on making the female body a desiring active doer rather than a receiver, and this was an expression of the woman's desire to change the type of relationship between her and the man's authority, and vanquishing his virility.

Key Words: *body writing, masculine oppression, feminist culture, body authority, discovery of lust, sexual phantasma, erotic novel.*

¹ Salwa al Nu'aymī was born in Damascus in 1950. She is a Syrian writer, a poet, and a Journalist. She lives in Paris and was a general secretary of one of its libraries. She studied in Sorbonne University.

Introduction

The body in the Arab culture is highly sensitive, confusing, and cautious, especially in contemporary literary text that deals with the body of the woman, who speaks about her body adventures, its vigor, pleasure, and fragmentation in its desire and mortality in the other. Because this culture deprives the female body from its linguistic and mental right and confines it in one semantic field that it does not leave, except to mazes of exclusion and cancellation. In view of this, any type of writing by the woman about her body, within the contexts and systems of this culture is considered opposing and resisting, and works on destroying the male narrative taste that is engraved deeply in the social memory². As the body is an ambiguous taboo place in the Arab culture, its approach in the feminist narrative literature constituted a double indicator of a social development and a development in the artistic structure of the novel.

Since the 1970s of the last century, the number of women writers has increased, and the woman's mastery of the narrative techniques, the elements of writing, and the novel structure. Besides, social openness increased, and the woman was given several social liberties, at least in some of the Eastern countries and the Maghreb countries. The novel went beyond its constant dependence on the body in order to show sexual suppression, and the description of the female body and the relationship between the two sexes, started to be classified in the path of the fictional environment, rather than in the areas of danger, and rebellion against the prevalent and the prohibited³.

In this way, after the passage of several ages and centuries in her daring and frank writings which were strictly prohibited in the past times for fear of causing social scandals, the Arab woman writer became able to express her feelings freely and daringly. Such writings, which talked about the body and its vigorousness, glow, fire, and impact on the man, were considered taboos in the past centuries, not only for the woman writer, but even for the man writer himself, too.

In this way, after the passage of centuries of daring and frank writings, which were prohibited for fear of causing social scandals, the Arab woman writer managed to express her feelings freely and daringly. Such writings that talk about the body, its vigor, flame and fire, and its effect on the man, were considered taboos in the previous decades, not only for the women writers, but for the men writers, as well. Thus, the women writers were able to pass to us their opinions clearly without fear or shame of the man, in general and the oriental man, in particular.

Thus, the Arab woman writer was able for the first time to creatively exploit her femininity in her literary writings, and arouse the sexual and intellectual instincts of the Arab reader in their various images and colors, but not in their bestial and wild way.

The 'body' represents one of the axes around which the texts of women literature revolves, and as much as the question is connected to the Arab women novel, it is possible to say that the female body is an element of significant presence besides other elements, and the degree of interest in it varies from one text to the other. While some novels give it just fleeting interest, others are engaged in drawing its details and phantasms. This stereotypical vision represents the point of view towards the woman. Besides exclusion of the body in general, and the female body in particular, there is another point of view towards the female, which is related to 'desire', because it reflects a one-sided male desire that is based on magnifying the male "I", which leads to reducing the value of the other, the 'female'. Whatever the importance of the body in the world of the woman and the narrative phantasms that literature introduces about her body, it is a big mistake to reduce the woman into her 'body' only, and keep away the intertwined net of historical backgrounds, expectations, perspectives, and the psychological, emotional, and intellectual values that are related to the woman and her world. However, this does not mean that the female body is not fit to be a subject of literature or and inspirer

² Al-Ghadami, 'Abdallah, 1998, p. 83.

³ Al-Ra'i, 'Ali, 1979, p. 86; Kiwan, 'Abd al-'Ati, 2003, p. 45, 51.

of a literary expression, and the exploration of this semi-unknown object constitutes by itself a challenge to literature.⁴

What I mean here is the tendency to adopt a special marketing ideology of describing the body by isolating it from the intertwined net, as some women critics, such as Luce Iregary (b. in 1930) did. She maintained that the style can be known through its "intimate connection to flowing and touching", and she connected the woman's language to the female body and its physical pleasure. It is clear that the culture that excluded the woman and veiled her body made her see herself as an impressive body and consequently, she started highlighting this impression.⁵ Raman Selden warned against the phenomenon of exaggerated glorification of the body, and pointed out that some radical women writers made a big deal of the woman's biological features as a source of superiority rather than inferiority, and every radical treatment of the special nature of women is exposed to the danger of being occupied by a different side, and consequently, the site will be occupied by fanatic males⁶.

The woman writes about her body because of her belief that literature is not exclusive to entrance from open doors, and its fundamental function is opening closed doors and penetrating the walls of silence, as writing is a reading of the self, first and foremost. Real knowledge includes exposing the "I", as Barthes argues⁷. However, Idris 'Abd al-Nour says that the woman turns her body into an icon and a mental image that cannot be complete except by its representation by the man who possesses the source of this image through conceptions that are attributed to the mythological establishment of the phenomenon of virility. In that way, the entity of the female body is not achieved unless the man's point of view to it establishes knowledge by its rhetoric breakaway⁸.

It deserves mentioning that the exclusive monopoly of the feminist novel in the body is guided by causes that are connected to society's view to the body in general, which created a feeling in the woman that she is desired on the level of the body and not for any other cause. Thus, the domination of a specific cause on the woman's feeling that she is a comprehensive cultural system leads to reducing her femininity to a mere body. There is a certain strategy that organizes the relationship between the giver of the body and its user. The more the barriers are penetrated in order to possess the body of the woman, the more the desire is to explore the ambiguity of the other, which is her body. Here, the desire deteriorates and takes an absolute sensual dimension. Georges Bataille expressed this issue saying: "The erotic desire is a desire to go beyond taboos, a desire for what remains hidden in the body of the other; therefore, a large number of narrative texts make the body a focus, around which the relationships that are relevant to the events, actions and deeds, revolve; the narrative representation reconstructs the cultural dominant things that about the body in a way that does not contradict their active nature in society, as this narrative representation introduces in an implied and hidden way the dispute and tension that exists in the body, being a female identity that is renewed culturally, and fulfills for the woman her specificities, but not her uniqueness as a superior being. It also shows its uses and violations as an object of pleasure and desire. All that deepens the problem of the manifestation

⁴ Women's criticism supported this vision, especially after its movement from historical and social sciences to the field of psychoanalysis and cultural and literary studies and its analysis and criticism of the philosophical heritage, revealing the attempts to escape from the body, sex and temptation of the unconsciousness. It is these attempts that kept this philosophical heritage one-sided, refusing interaction and focuses on the contradiction between the soul and body, between the mind and emotion, revealing the thoughts of authority, dominance and control of emotion and body, and clashing with fear of the woman, and as a result, devaluates her and everything that is connected to the body, desire and sex. See: Morris, Pam, 2002, p. 124-127.

⁵ Iregary, Luce (1974). " *This Sex Which Is Not One*", Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl I, *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literate Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, MJ: Rutgers University Press. 1997. PP. 363-369.

⁶ Selden, Raman, 1998, p. 89.

⁷ Barthes, Roland, 1992, p. 96.

⁸ Idris, 'Abd al-Nor, 2004, p. 74.

of the body in literature. Mohammad Barradeh speaks about that connection when he stresses that the feminist writing is a beginning of the woman's inspiration of her body, release of her hidden feelings, and exploration of its different language from the language of projections and phantasms with which the man shrouded the woman's vitality and spontaneity⁹.

The general existential oppression that is exerted by the male social, moral, psychological relationships on the woman makes her writings quite far from her overwhelming desire to master the necessary language to coin her desire in writing. The woman's writing is an explosion of objects that the body involves. They are hidden objects that appear through associations and gestures and intensify their effect on the body of the other that is identical or different. Therefore, the written text constitutes an existential extension to the writer's self and intensification of other objects that are beyond it. Writing by the body gains the feminist Self its identity, which follows unwillingly the prevalent social norms. Consequently, the Self sways between its painful feeling due to its subordinate dependence on the prevailing norms, her recognition of it as a reality, and between her listening to the negative desires of the body.

Awareness of the treatment with this particularity contributes to establishing a creative relationship between the woman and her writing in its different forms, and to the problematic treatment of the identity question in its connection with the question of the body, the female truth, and the writing activity as an existential extension that is reflected on the written words. The woman makes use of writing as a medium to assert herself within the general masculine system. She does not write for the sake of domineering the man, as he does by use of the law and decent manners. Through writing and speech, she throws all the fractures of her body and its waves.¹⁰

The feminist pen started breaking into the pornographic literature, which leaves the body of the text open onto the most intimate moments that are connected to the body without silencing its voice. Thus, everything that emanates from the body becomes a live image that calls for all the details that are most spontaneous and intertwined within the texture of the text, without evasions or feelings ashamed of any act, though they are still in the core of the human behavior.

Hence, the woman is likely to write with her body, denudes it and puts it in front of the receiver with the intent to drag him to its humanization and its culture¹¹. This characteristic puts her speech versus temptation. Shahrazad turns Shahryar from a 'stallion' and a 'murderer' into a human being who derives his knowledge from imaginary worlds of *Alf Layla wa Layla*. The woman's initiative to sexual intercourse has become a prominent step in the woman's struggle against the man's power and ascendancy in society. The woman adopts that initiative in order to redefine the concept of the Self. Sex, according to researcher Sawsan Naji, is no more a sin in the woman's view; it is her right as it is a right for the other¹². Therefore, the Arab women writers, who rebel against the literary male system intensify the presence of sex in their works, and that appears clearly in the novel of the study, *Burhān al-'Asal*.

⁹ Morris, Pam, 2002, p. 124-127; Barakat, Najwa, 1999, p. 142-144; Barradeh, Moḥammad, 1995, p. 100.

¹⁰ 'Affaya, Moḥammad, 1988, p. 19, 31, 35, 41.

¹¹ 'Writing the Body' is a term that refers to feminist writing that stems from the body. The term was coined and introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1974 in her book *Revolution of Language in Poetry*. It is noticed that a certain obvious rapprochement was taking place between 'writing' and 'the body' in the contemporary human imagination, particularly the woman's imagination. In addition, since the end of the last century, writing stopped to be related to writing about the woman's experience within society as much as it is writing about wider spaces of the body and pushing the relationship between writing and the body to its extreme borders of interconnection. See: Helen, Cixos. 1974. p.385; Shuman, Moḥammad Aḥmad, 2003, p. 120.

¹² Taha, Ibrahim, *Al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*. V ol.27, 2006. pp.25-71.

The Study

There are several studies that deal with the subject of 'sex' in the writings of the Arab women writers. However, in my view, it is possible to consider Salwa al-Nu'aymī's, *Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of Honey* (2007) an erotic novel par excellence that made contemporary Arabic literature enter a new and critical stage. The woman's body in this novel speaks out its pornographic rite publicly, as al Nu'aymī calls things and objects by their common names, and she quickly pushes the reader into the world of her novel, regaining the link with a fundamental part of the Arab classical heritage.

In my opinion, al-Nu'aymī's audacity in writing about her body aims to provoke the masculine concepts and imply that the woman is a creative human being. That raised a lot of controversy and contradictory attitudes about her writing. Some critics support her views while others show objection to them. Some critics claim that, by her crossing the 'red lines' and breaking into taboo areas, and speaking about subjects and relations that are considered taboos, and prohibited belong in the realm of "pornography", and dealing with these subjects aimed to draw the attention of the readers, and highlight the character of the creative writer and a kind of temptation that the woman practices for a long time. It is also a female deed that aims to attract the reader to what the woman possesses as her exclusive authority.

Salwa al-Nu'aymī speaks in her novel *Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of Honey* by using the 'body language', insisting on treading on mines in order to start a constant debate with life and the other through personal female experiences that are derived from her female memory. She opened the doors of her memory in order to gain her body, the body of the female memory, and highlight the violated body in its sexual functions. al-Nu'aymī also caused a fracture in the structure of the dictatorial masculine language, and disruption in the central virility that is prevalent in the Arab narrativity, and tried to devote the discourse of femininity that believes in duality of gender. She tried to create by her feminine language a different language of a lover-and-beloved, a rejector-and-rejected, and a body in all its passionate and lustful tensions in order to draw an image that is not as it really is, but as an image that she wants the other to see. It is that image that she sought to change, and put it in its size, which it should have. When the body is reflected in the mirror of the woman writing it becomes a different body.

The Questions of the Study

The study introduces five questions and tries to find answers to them through analysis of the novel:

- Is the woman's writing of her body considered continuity of her slavery and servitude, or is it merely an attempt to cause a shock in order to liberate herself from slavery and servitude?
- Does the woman write about a sexual experience out of a personal experience that she lived, or is that experience merely a linguistic one that is created in her imagination?¹³
- Can the woman write about 'sex' using the real names that are commonly used about sex organs, without causing a scandal?
- Should the woman enter a conflict with language while she is writing her body?
- When the woman writes her emotional or sexual life, her goal is to reach the other in her full radiance and her full truth because if she does not convey that lived moment in its full transparency, why should she write at all?
- Should the reader's judgment on literature be moral, or should criticism stop at the contents of the book? If yes, should the moral judgment be accepted on literature?

¹³ For example, when the novel of Burhan al-'Asal was published in 2007, the first question that was introduced to her, as she says: "Is the experience in the novel of Burhan al-'Asal a personal experience?" and I reply, as usual, by laughing, and tell them that all that I write is real and all that I write is imagined." For more information about the whole interview, see the article: "al-Jins fi Adab al-Katibat al-'Arabiyyat" on: <https://www.dw.com/ar>.

All these questions will be dealt with in this study, and the study will try to answer them based on the contents and language of the novel of the study.

The idea of the novel *Burhān al-'Asal* is simple and its main statement focuses on the writer's protest against the actual condition regarding the "sexual question" in the Arab world and its treatment, people's ignorance of the details of the body, and their attitudes about their sexual life, which is characterized by ignorance and decadence. The novel also makes comparisons between people's ignorance at present and their misery in the prevailing life in the Arab world in previous ages through reference to books from the Arab heritage and religious texts.

In the folds of this statement, there are three sub-statements that focus on the relationship between love and body, love and sex, secrecy in which this life is practiced and publicity that that hides everything that is related to this issue.

The Heroine raises questions that the readers ask, but the difference is that she introduces these questions for debate and public currency. Society, however, prefers to keep that debate concealed. Salwa al Nu'aymī asks the readers through her novel not to stop writing about sex and stop talking about it in an indirect and evasive way, depending in that on books of the Arab sex heritage that reminds us directly of sex organs and sex positions, and which ones give most pleasure or are most beneficial to the body: "These texts are part of my culture. These texts are part of my imagination" ¹⁴We also read the following: "I remember that I met him in the heat of my immersion in reading books from our sex heritage. I started entertaining myself by referring everything that takes place between us to classical texts; I read them and innovated in detailing them" ¹⁵. We also read: "I am not alone in this ignorance. It is apparent that it is common in this age of sexual decadence that we are living now. I have no choice, but to read the sexual questions in the Internet Newspaper *Ilaf* in order to discover this common Arab sexual despair. I imagine the specialist doctor pulling his hair as he was answering the questions of the puzzled readers"¹⁶.

The beginning starts with a chapter called: 'Bab Azwaj al-Mut'a wa Kutub al-Bah' (A Chapter about Husbands of Pleasure and Books about Sexual Intercourse) with the opening sentence: "I summon the bodies"¹⁷ and it ends with a chapter about 'al- Həyal' (A Chapter about the Tricks) and with the sentence of "I did not live my life as a scandal, neither do I write it as a scandal"¹⁸.

Salwa al Nu'aymī divided her novel into chapters and titles, following the system of classical Arabic books. Her novel is divided into eleven chapters that carry titles that refer to the Arab and Islamic heritage: Bab Azwaj al-Mut'a wa Kutub al-Bah; (A Chapter about Husbands of Pleasure and Books about Sexual Intercourse), Bab al-Mufakkir wa al-Tarikh al-Shaksi (A Chapter about the Thinker and his personal History), Bab al-Jins wa al-Madina al-'Arabiya' (A Chapter about Sex and the Arab City), Bab al-Maa'; (A Chapter about Water), Bab al-Hikayat; (A Chapter about Stories), Bab al-Mudallika wa Zawjuha al-Zani: (A Chapter about the Massagist and her fornicator husband), Bab Shatahat al-Jasad; (A Chapter about Phantasm's of the body), Bab Zaman al-Tuqaya fi al-Mujtama'āt al-'Arabiya (A Chapter about the Age of the Pious Arab Societies), Bab al-Lisaniyāt (A Chapter about Linguistics), Bab al-Tarbiya wa al-Ta'lim; (A Chapter about Education and Teaching), Bab al-Ḥiyal (A Chapter about Tricks).

Each part chapter about itself, but the contents of the chapters narrate adventures of a girl who discovered her body through her several sexual relations, out of conviction that knowledge of sex is connected with learning about it rather than just knowing its theory.

The novel *Burhān al-'Asal* starts its violent narrative bombardment in which the Heroine reveals her secret desires for the ones she slept with. She says that they were not lovers, but just sexual tools. "They were

¹⁴ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 21.

¹⁵ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 17-18.

¹⁶ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 46.

¹⁷ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 13.

¹⁸ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 150.

not for me more than that. The matters are defined from the beginning... did I use them? As sexual tools? Why not?"¹⁹

The events of the novel start with a meeting between the 'Thinker' through reading of books from the sexual heritage. The novel talks about a woman who lives in a culture outside her Arab culture; a woman who lives in France and works at the University Library, where she reads voraciously the books about sexual heritage, and thus, she becomes "an expert in books of bah" (bah = Sexual Intercourse). Then she starts applying what her sheikhs wrote about the benefits of sexual intercourse. She reads al-Nafrawi, al-Tifashi, al-Tousi, al-Soyuti, al-Qazwini and al-Tijani. She slowly gains consciousness of the Arab Collective Self, and her Individual Self. The Arab Collective Self-respects the body and its desires, and introduces the forgotten history of the Arab sexual culture, but, in order to narrate the events of her body, she returns to the Arab sexual history, which she studied and learned by heart in order that she would realize her consciousness of her individual Self. She turns the issue of sexual intercourse into a pleasure and expression of a psychological partnership with another body, because without that other body, partnership will not be achieved. In this way, she gets out of her Individual Self and returns to the forgotten history in her and in her society and in the Society of the Pious, as she calls them, and in order that she can be harmonious with herself, her expression about herself should inevitably be clear and equal to the clarity of her body.

The story is completed when her Library Boss asks her on behalf of the French National Library, where she was working as a Library Secretary, to attend a Book Fair which will be held in New York (which was later cancelled because of terror activities). She was supposed to present a research about classical tabooed Arabic sexual books on the margin of the Book Fair, under the title of: 'Hell of Books'. Thus, the research that she was supposed to complete was a pretext to write the fictional work, and the novel turns into a pretext to writing the research. As a result, some critics may see that this fictional work is not a novel in the accurate meaning of the word, and it is closer to a research than to a novel. They argue that mere writing about the theme of 'sex' as a research is a fundamental leverage to the narrator, through which the writer narrates a secret side of her life. The Heroine takes a leave and departs from Paris with her books and resources to Tunisia: "I asked for a leave from my work at the library, carried my books, and escaped to Tunisia" ²⁰.

The novel is written between Paris and Tunisia: "I thought that writing on the subject of sex was not considered a taboo anymore, because I was still reading what was written; I said that in the text itself, making fun of the Arab censorship at the time of the Internet –Dialogue" ²¹. This similarity does not mean 'literal similarity', and it does not mean that the female narrator of the text is the writer herself either. This identification and similarity falls - in between -, namely, between the imaginative and the non-imaginative. The narrative deed and the experience are not included, either. The writer does not narrate the events that took place in themselves. Yet, she introduces sensual realizations that are intended to impart news telling and giving pleasure and excitement²².

The writer introduces the Heroine of her novel as a character that depends on part of the Arab heritage in order to strengthen her sexual convictions. When she talks fluently about her sexual desires and adventures, she resorts to books of heritage that she needs in order to complete her research. Then she employs her adventures and her research on the Arab sexual heritage in order to challenge to the social fake, which pushes us to hide our desires. My view is that : Salwa al Nu'aymī wanted by that to remind us that the books of heritage in the Arab culture include a lot of books that deal with the body-sex, and they were written by well-known jurisprudents and scholars, who had their clear imprint on the Arab culture such as the books of *al-Suhaqiyat/ Lesbians* by al-Samiri; *Nuzahat al-Albab fi ma la Yujad fi Kitab* by al-Tifashi; *Rawd al-'Ater fi Nuzhat al-Khater* by al-Nafrawi; *Ruju' al-Sheikh ila Sibah* by an unknown writer; *Tawq al- Hamama* by Ibn Hāzīm al-Andalusi.

¹⁹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 13.

²⁰ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 51.

²¹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 84.

²² Silverman, G. Hugh, 2002, p. 151.

Therefore, the Heroine of *Burhan al-'Asal* refers what she lives with the Thinker, whom she met at a certain conference, which occupies the widest space in her life and body to sections in those books, or in her words: "The practical experience intertwined with the theoretical base", but she expands her desire to its widest borders and avoids the experience of 'love'. When the Thinker asks her if the relationship between them is only 'sex', she tells him that she loves nothing except her body: "when the Thinker asked me in the beginning: is what is between us only 'sex'? I did not reply. I did not reply. I did not say to him: I love nothing except my body. I have no other expression about love".²³

Thus, the practical application of her sheikhs' bits of advice is what pushes her to telling her story with the Thinker: "I used to reach him wet, and the first thing that he was doing was: inserting his finger between my legs, checking the honey as he used to call it, tasting it, kissing me, and going deep into my mouth".²⁴

In my view, it is possible that Salwa al-Nu'aymī resorted to this style in order to support her Heroine's point of view, and to emphasize to herself, first, and to the reader, second, that the Heroine is not introducing anything new, but she is the daughter of her heritage, and no one should blame her if she is loyal to it. The Heroine is not satisfied with that, and she introduces more examples from heritage and from her private experiences, which can be considered an erotic dictionary that she can lean on in the novel. Besides, the sexual heritage makes her feel freer in satisfying her desires because it maintains that suppression causes depression and madness: "After years, I detected by a practical experience the truth of what my sheikhs of the Arab writers wrote about the benefits of sexual intercourse as they call them: psychological and physical illnesses! Madness, depression and melancholy are caused at one go because of sexual suppression?"²⁵

The Thinker is not the only man in the Heroine's life; there are al-Jawab, al-Sari', and al-Ba'id. She likes to call them by 'nicknames'. There is also her husband. It is true that she does not mention him, but the novel includes clear indicators of his existence: "I practiced hiding the husband's love from lovers, and I also learned from Marguerite Douras about the husband, and the love of lovers, as women are perfect at that"²⁶.

In my opinion, the Heroine of the novel is an extremely bold woman; she refuses the shackles as she refuses the narrow reality, and the Thinker, with whom I knew this secret life, was the man in whom I summarized all men, whom I knew through his character. However, we do not know about this Thinker, except his ability to excite the Heroine, and these are his features and characteristics.

Memory, imagination, and sexual heritage books are the factors that define the features of the Heroine of the novel. By these three characteristics, she perfectly draws the writer's vision of what she desires and what she wants to declare and reveal in such a way that these three factors become part of her culture, her imagination and her sexual life. Even her queries dealt with her classical teachers because they were larger than these questions like the following: "Did my being a woman detonate my narrative readings? Isn't my consideration to them as 'secrets' a part of the castrated education on which I was raised?²⁷ "Why can I boast of reading the Western and Eastern pornographic literature but should hide reading al-Tifashi?"²⁸. Salwa al Nu'aymī answers herself, saying: "I wanted to prove practically that the Arabic language is able to write about sex and express the intimate, before and after, and that the pleasure of sex occupies a fundamental position in this culture, far from the concept of 'sin and desecration, through a textual intertwining of her speech with illustrations from classical writers such as al-Jahiz, al-Soyuti, al-Nafrawi, and al-Tifashi"²⁹.

²³ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 35.

²⁴ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 30.

²⁵ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 19.

²⁶ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 24

²⁷ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 23.

²⁸ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 22.

²⁹ An interview that was conducted by journalist Reem Najami with the writer Salwa al-Nu'aymī, in Qunaytera, and was republished in the Iraqi newspaper *al-Watan* in Issue 27.

The Heroine does not stop mocking the Arab "Pious Society", who declare something other than what they hide. She asks herself: "Why can I declare my fondness of *Georges Bataille*, Henry Miller, *Marquis de Sade*, Casanova, and *Cama Sutra*, and pretend to forget al-Soyuti and al-Nafrawi?"³⁰ She adds that "How can I deny being the daughter of this heritage?"³¹

The Heroine of the novel, who can nearly be the author of the novel, is clear from the beginning, without implying that this novel is an autobiography of the Syrian writer Salwa al Nu'aymī, who lives in Paris. It seems that she decided to reveal the prohibitions about her sexual experiences and speak openly about all the intimate details that society prefers to keep secret. She daringly introduces her goal from the beginning of the novel: "There are some people who conjure spirits, but I conjure bodies. I do not know my spirit or the spirits of others. I know my body and their bodies"³².

After these preliminary announcements, what is introduced is an erotic novel that names every sexual organ by its common name and discloses secrets that take place in beds without introductions. What is noticed here is that the Narrator's vision to the world and to others passes through her body, and this is exactly what she announces in the first line of the novel as mentioned above. Awareness of something emerges through one's sensual and physical recognition. The body is the only thing that can contain and absorb things and be engaged with them, distinguish them, and sort them. In the experience of interaction with other bodies and the world, the human experience and the existential experience are achieved. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) says: "I see the external objects of the world through my body; I touch them; I discover them, and go around them."³³ We read in the novel how the body achieves its sexual experience: "He pulls me to his chest, and I throw myself on him; he kisses my eyes and lips and I suck his saliva; he touches my abdomen; I open my legs and he enters me deeply to burn with me..."³⁴.

From the beginning, the Heroine emphasizes that she does not separate between soul and body: "My soul is my body. Separation between the soul and the body does not exist in our Arab culture, but we learned that from the West. My body is only my intelligence and my education"³⁵. We also read: "I know that I am the opposite of what they taught us – a polygamist by nature... this is not the appropriate term. I should say, 'multi-lover', or more correctly, 'multi-man' woman."³⁶ These are amazing sentences, and probably shocking to the Arab masculine and feminine consciousness, as there is no separation between soul and body, and what we read here is a woman who speaks about her body, which is her identity.

Salwa al Nu'aymī introduces the Heroine of her novel as a completely physical woman, who thinks all day long about nothing except her body and lusts: "I am only a body"³⁷. She draws the Heroine as a libidinous character: "I summon them and return to my story with them as they pass through a passing body..."³⁸ We do not know if the writer intended to depict her Heroine in this way or this image or if the Heroine inadvertently calls a certain man, whom she needs just for a few stolen hours in closed places, by the nickname 'Thinker' just because he proposes to her his sexual thoughts. Maybe she concludes at a certain point that every woman is the 'result' of the men who passed in her life, which is, in my opinion, the factor that defines and limits the entity of the woman in an instinctive bestial frame.

The novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* invites us give two notes: The *first* note says that dependence on the body is not the woman's choice, and her destiny is the man and his social institutes that insist on turning the woman into a beneficial body for men in a frame of exchange of interests. The *second* note, which is related to the

³⁰ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 22-23.

³¹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 30.

³² al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 13.

³³ Teebis, Yosuf, 2009, p. 56.

³⁴ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 32.

³⁵ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 35.

³⁶ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 17.

³⁷ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 39.

³⁸ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 13.

first, is related to the sexual life of the woman and her body, which has become dishonored: "He said that it was hot, and took off his dress. He said it was hot and took off his pants... I observed him with external neutrality...he said it was hot, and stayed in his white knickers..., in the end he said it was very hot and took off everything and remained unclothed..."³⁹

In my opinion, a new writing in this novel is established for assaulting and dishonoring the female body. It is not writing that aims to describe the external life of a lustful and lascivious body or narrating sexual experiences with other bodies, but a writing that aims to reveal the internal life of that body, which is assaulted and dishonored by the social institutes and their masculine relationship. In this meaning, writing of the body does not necessarily mean that we are in front of a lustful and lascivious writing, but it is more correct to say that we are in front of a pornographic writing, which means a writing that writes this female body in its relationships with the violence of the social sexual system and its cruelty and contempt to the woman, and depriving her body from its natural freedom and life, and subjugating it to monstrosity and violation, and absenting its original identity and its natural desire.

In other words, the purpose of writing the female body means that we should ask ourselves: Is the woman's fulcrum on her female body innate and original in her or is it an identity that is established in her through social circumstances? Does the female body possess its right in freedom, desire, and choice? Or is it subject to the social, educational, and sexual system? Does the woman make her own destiny? Or she suffers from it and goes through rupture, and division, especially on the level of the body, specifically?

It is noticed that the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* argues that the fulcrum of the female body is not in the woman only but is also in the man's body. This precedes in the man as if he were the origin, and the woman is the face that cannot be revealed in a society that is led by masculine values. The female body in previous literatures was not expressed by the woman, and we often get acquainted with it through men's texts, namely, through a male vision. Thus, this kind of the new women's writing seems that it aims to emphasize the right of the female body to exist and practice its right without a medium, and to introduce its view about the other body, namely, the male body, and to formulate its view about the male and female bodies.

Consequently, in my opinion is that the new women writings are the writings that write the body from its *external* materialistic aspects in their relations with the *internal* psychological aspects. Besides, these writings see the act of 'love' from a binocular that combines between 'matter' and 'soul'. It is impossible to talk about the body deprived of its internal hidden life in its features which are connected to one's soul, mind, thought, memory, and imagination. Therefore, the writer declares openly in the first lines of the novel that there is no 'love' and no 'passion'; there is just a 'wild body' that narrates its relationships, its whims, and tales with men, especially the Heroine's most lustful relation with the Thinker, through whose body the Heroine discovered her body. Here lies the main *theme* of the novel: the body is always in need of another body through which it fulfills itself and is discovered through it.

In view of this, we can say that the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* shows that the man's view about the woman, body and sex, is an immoral view because it objectifies the body of the woman, and considers it merely a vacuum to extinguish desires and yearnings, and deprives it of its humanity. The novel of the study, *Burhān al-'Asal* does not agree to objectify the woman and deprive her of her human identity in its material (body) meaning and spiritual (psychological and emotional) meaning. In other words, the novel is not satisfied with observing the external materialistic reality of the body, but it carries a psychological point of view that reveals the fact that the body has internal hidden emotions that are necessary to be taken in consideration.

The novel talks about the body, love and desire from a perspective that tries to create equivalence between the man and the woman, and tries to find its position between the two: between the physical and the psychological, between the material and the spiritual, between the sensual and the pleasurable, and between the realistic and the romantic. It is the language of confessions that expresses the secret, the hidden,

³⁹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 70-71.

the intimate and the internal; a language that speaks out states of fragmentation, pain, and violence. It also speaks out states of love, dream, and pleasure. The novel of the study makes use from the characteristics of the two types of writing. It writes the body of the woman from the outside and is likely to expose the most sensitive organs and the most exciting movements. This is called 'external writing' of the body: "He was telling me that women are two kinds: the lettuce-woman and the ember-woman, and I was asking him maliciously, but he did not reply, and was pulling me to his chest and I threw myself on him; he was kissing my eyes and lips, and I was sucking his saliva, and he was feeling my abdomen, and I opened my legs, and he was entering me deeply to burn with me, and I was asking him: and how many kinds are men? And my pleasure and joy were making me forget all my questions"⁴⁰.

This writing describes the woman's body from outside and does justice to the identity of the female body. It is an external writing that expresses the tired and exhausted body of the woman. Its look at her body also expresses its view to her body artistically and describes the major transformations that the woman's body is exposed to. At the same time, it is a kind of writing that reveals that the body has its own internal hidden life, which is full of unspeakable feelings and emotions. This means that 'internal writings' are bets on 'body-writing', because body writing means in reality writing about the internal world of the body, whether it is a man's body or a woman's body: "I possess a moral sense that has no connection to the values of the world that surrounds me. This personal moral sense is what weighs my actions... I am the one who programmed my standards. What concerns me is the meaning of what I do and its reflections on me and my life"⁴¹.

In my opinion, sex for the woman in the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* is a 'desire', and 'desire' is an internal feeling, but it is not exclusive to men, because the woman's body also possesses feelings and desires. All this means that sex starts from the *internal* and moves out to the *external* when contact takes place between the two bodies, which is in essence, a response to an internal call: "I used to go to him in the morning before going to work. I climb the stairs quickly; I ring the bell a light ring, and he opens the door immediately, as if he were waiting for me behind it, half asleep; I throw my clothes and enter his bed burning; I stick to him and start smelling him; He raises the cover, and his hand passes the details of my body very slowly; He tastes my honey with satisfied seriousness..."⁴².

What characterizes *Burhān al-'Asal* is that it transfers the female body to the space of narrative fiction, and introduces it in an anti-romantic way, namely, as a Self for desire and pleasure rather than something that is judged to remain a subject of pleasure for others and their delight. It tells about the body experiences in life in a strong realistic way. Thus, it introduces a materialistic body viewpoint that is strongly connected to sex. Its point of departure is that desire and pleasure are among the essential natural components of the identity of man whether a male or a female. Therefore, Salwa al Nu'aymī writes one's pleasure in her novel: "... he approaches the bed, I lie on my abdomen, raising my back and leaning on my arms; he is behind me and I do not see him; his palms move insistently drawing my borders from my shoulders to my thighs and settle on my buttocks; he pulls me to him; I stick to him more and more in order to be filled with him..."⁴³

Salwa al-Nu'aymī invests the psychological and imaginative factors and introduces a narrative fictional structure that is extremely suggestive, intensive, and symbolic. What gives the writing its power in this novel is that it expresses the desire, whose subject is present intensively; the desire being a loss, as Todorov argues in his book 'Poetics'; desire is an essential and structural subject that is specific to literature: the writer in his words about desire continues talking about himself ⁴⁴.

It is clear that the novel bets from the beginning on the revolution against the heritage, and breaking the oriental taboos, and the shocking audacity. It is an audacity that refers the events to history and not to

⁴⁰ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 32.

⁴¹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.15.

⁴² al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.30.

⁴³ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.14.

⁴⁴ Todorov, 1992, p. 44.

reality, because history is already in the past and cannot be asked to show severe accountability. However, the writer can be accountable for reality, and this led to the existence of two levels of expression: the *first level* is related to the expression of the heritage books and their shocking audacity, and their open direct illustrations of naming everything that is related to the sexual intercourse experience: the sexual organs, the types of sexual course, and abnormality of practicing a sexual intercourse. The *second level* is the narrating Self that is occupied, mainly, by declaring its attitude about that shackling that is practiced on the woman and strangles her body and its active presence.

In my view, the writer hides in the audacity of heritage, and takes it as motivation for her narration and expression about her present reality. Her audacity is introduced at the beginning of the novel. In my opinion, in this way, al Nu'aymī managed to penetrate the major taboos in the writing of Arab feminist writing through her treatment of the issue of sex and body. She succeeded in dealing with the subject of body and sex without embarrassment or stumbling. She did not speak by hinting; on the contrary, she used the common names that are used for the sexual organs and scenes. She did not borrow terms that refer to the issues of pleasure, or sexual lust. Her language is frank, open, and void of ambiguous allusions. She dealt with the subject despite the prohibitions, religious taboos, and moral controls that consider the subject as one of the prohibited issues in the religious culture and social norms. Besides, the subject is classified under the arts that people keep silent about, especially if the source of talking is the woman. Therefore, the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal*, in my opinion, reflects a social and cultural change because it leaves nothing that it does not speak about openly.

There is no doubt about al-Nu'aymī's possession of strong and daring ability to expose things that people keep silent about in the Arab societies. However, in my view, she failed in narrating life in its details as she turned the Heroine and the men in her life into people who always declare their sexual hallucination. This is not a moral judgment on my side as much as it is an aesthetic judgment, because the writer failed in keeping up the narrative rhetoric and the poetics of the novel, though she is a poet and a story writer, and these two genres are able to intensify and pick up highly figurative moments, but the narrative gaps occurred as a result of this unjustified exposition of statements by the heritage books.

In my view, it is possible to consider this novel a work that falls between breaking of a taboo and a work that breaks the language of the body. The novel remains loyal to this statement throughout the pages that narrate stories that accompany summoning new bodies. The body was intended to be the main hero of the novel, no matter the soul that it wears. It is the body in its relationship with the 'pleasure'. The mutual relationship between our body and the body of the other constitutes a texture of a secret parallel life as it is introduced in the novel: "I have no soul. The sentence was engraved in my head, and my life started going through it. I knew that I was only a 'body'⁴⁵.

I also believe that al-Nu'aymī did not limit her interest to one aspect in the character of the woman as she managed through this novel to introduce several subjects including the impasses of the intellectual Arab woman who has double values and standards of freedom. She did not also limit her interest to describing the emotional world of the female and introspection of its rich varied emotions that embody the privacy of the female Self, but intended to reveal the suppressed storming desires of the female body, the change of the norms and their taboos, without fulfilling them because of the types of oppressions that are exerted on her. Femininity gets agitated inside the woman's entity, which is revealed through several attitudes in the novel. It is a revelation of the essence of femininity which is possessed by the craze of limitless desire.

These feelings are described by the Heroine of the novel, who is overpowered by the pains of femininity and agitation of the body. She says: "I check with my lips every spot in his body; my eyes are open and my body, too. Between my eager hastiness and his delighted slowdown, we find our rhythm. Time passes but we do not separate, and do not stop; under him, above him, beside him, lying on my abdomen, kneeling on my knees. Between each position and the other, he was repeating a sentence that he was always saying: I have an

⁴⁵ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.35.

idea. His ideas do not end, and I love his ideas and philosophy".⁴⁶We also read: "I did not walk with him on a public road, and he did not walk beside me without putting his hand on my buttocks, feeling them from over my clothes or on my flesh directly. I shout and keep away from him: Crazy? We are on a public road. People might see us!

I was coward, and my practical sexual freedom did not express itself except far from the eyes of others. He used to say: you draw people's attention when you keep away from me. They do not see anything. No one will look at us if you keep walking quietly. He answers me and my disapproval, while he returns his hand to my buttocks, and I cannot help sighing. I stick to him and forget the strange eyes. Then he looks for the door of the first building that we pass by in order to pull me and kiss my lips, suck my tongue and feel my chest. In the beginning, I felt confused, and in the course of time, I started walking beside him, and my eyes looked with him for any place in which I can kiss him, suck his tongue and feel his body"⁴⁷.

In another quotation, al-Nu'aymī describes the vigor of the body when it is at the utmost of pleasure and desire: "Do you know what I admire in him? As soon as I touch his organ, it erects. Ready all the time. In his homeland, he did not know except masturbation. He was a student at the university. Even prostitutes were expensive to him"⁴⁸. This emphasizes that al-Nu'aymī, the woman, the writer, loves her being a female, and does not fear to express her femininity in its individual and general emotional and sensual dimension. The specialty of the language that she uses in her writing result from her feeling, which is characterized by a feminist sensitivity that characterizes her from the language that the man uses. His language differs from her language, even if the subject of writing is about the 'woman'.

Al-Dağmouni, Mohammad said: when the woman feels that she does not possess anything except her body, she employs it in her state of rebellion and coercion as a tool of work and satisfaction⁴⁹ as if women are always like that; they do not want anything beyond their bodies⁵⁰, and the state of the women's rebellion is revealed through its employment for delighting and enjoyment. Therefore, al-Nu'aymī reveals sexual practices in a direct way and without evasions, in order to shock society:

"And I answer that he has to find the answer by himself; he has to stretch his hand between my legs to taste it: Burhan Halawat al-'Asal (= Proof of the Sweetness of Honey). It is the same honey, as Ibn Arabi says"⁵¹.

And she says in the words of the loved Thinker with whom she discovered her body and loved him to distraction: "I did not know a woman before you, whose face declares her erection"⁵².

Salwa al-Nu'aymī's description of the woman/ body puts her in a duality that is contradictory morally and practically, as she is only a pleasure and only a body. She is something desired and necessary, but something that is sinful and forbidden at the same time. This contradiction that characterizes society's outlook, mainly the man's outlook, about her and his attitude towards her, is a strange contradictory outlook that surrounds the woman. This duality in her body is sinful, and the physical relationship outside the institute of marriage is a deadly major sin that makes her deserve stoning. In spite of that, this body enjoys an incomparable significance and is surrounded by haloes, and any violation of it is considered a violation of the family taboo, which is punished by murder that washes the family dishonesty. The woman's body is profane, and despite that, it is her only capital to get a pleasure through it.

The Heroine of the novel says: "I know that I am the opposite of everything that they taught us; I know that I am a polygamist, of course, like most women, probably. This is not the appropriate term. I should say, 'multi-lovers' woman, or more correctly, multi-men's woman"⁵³.

⁴⁶ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.30.

⁴⁷ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.34.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 134

⁴⁹ Al-Dağmouni, Mohammad, 1991, p. 112.

⁵⁰ Mustāğamni, Aḥlam, 1993, p. 474.

⁵¹ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 149.

⁵² al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 21.

The excavation for knowledge that Salwa al-Nu'aymī did in the body of the novel and the body of the Heroine of the novel is a combination between symbol, imagination and reality, is derived from the sexual Islamic and Arab heritage books, and depends on the socio-historical, ideological, political, and psychological vision in a free liberated way, because the liberation of the Self is considered a liberation of the body... the body being considered a language and a text that is open onto all the possibilities of interpretations, as liberation of the Self is considered liberation of the body.

In the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal*, the body is liberated through memory and imagination, and the philosophy of the body that can be expressed through the appearances and sociological and cultural conditions that cannot be understood except through deep sociohistorical absorption and a comprehensive vision of man's consciousness of his body.

In my view, Salwa al-Nu'aymī wrote about the body and sex under the influence of that slogan, which Simone de Beauvoir raised. It says: "This body is our body, and we want to dwell it rightly and deal with it freely"⁵⁴. However, due to the publication of the novel during the existence of totalitarian ideologies that cancel one's right in being different made it live a cultural and creative alienation due to the absence of actual conditions that approve one's right of being different within a coalition. The general atmosphere in the Arab countries in general is not ready yet to accept a writing of this kind, especially if it is written by a woman. The cultural scene itself is not able to adopt a different writing that requests its right to be different.

In other words, we can say that al-Nu'aymī's discourse about the body is an extension to a literary tradition that is not strange to the Arab heritage, but the irony that draws our attention is that when the issue is related to the woman, criminalization and prohibition and red lines stand up in front of her as soon as she tries to open just onto her body, or tries to talk about her relation with the other, or tries to write the dialogue of her body with the other body that differs from her, because, by doing that, she becomes open onto the prohibited, the taboo, and the sacred instead of remaining merely a noticed Self.

The woman kept her language far from the man's language in her writing after she learned the art of writing and developed herself and created a special style for herself that distinguishes her from the man. Therefore, her product is no more a repetition of the man's writing model. In this way, she gained her specificity, and emphasized her existence as an independent self that is not subordinate to the man after she liberated herself from her fears⁵⁵. Since the female body bears its own signs, it meets with the text, which is an open system of signs of various meanings. Because reading deconstructs the text in such a way that the signs achieve the indication, and the indication, achieves the meaning through its interpretation, on the other hand, we read in the chapters of: 'The Thinker and the Personal History'; 'The Thinker as a Story by Himself',⁵⁶; 'I Divided My Life Into Two Parts: B.C. Before the Thinker and After the Thinker'⁵⁷; and 'It Is Enough to Think of Him to Make My Blood Boil'⁵⁸.

Salwa al-Nu'aymī narrates the events of her novel as they are narrated in an autobiography because she refers the reader to the narrating Self in the fictional work. The novel is narrated through the feminine first-person singular pronoun, "I". There is only one "I" who talks about herself, about the others and about history. Salwa al-Nu'aymī did not mention the name of the Narrator. The question that arises here is: Does the "I" represent the voice of the woman through whom she speaks?

The reader is confused whether the reference of the pronoun "I" is to the writer or the Narrator, because the structural unity of the novel is based on the single feminine discourse. Based on that, the researcher of this study maintains that the existential subjective life of the writer is that side of the writer that leaks to the text, and thus, the meaning or the subjective world is read by the interpreter as the meaning of

⁵³ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p.17.

⁵⁴ De Beauvoir, Simon, 1972. p. 54.

⁵⁵ Bader, Fatima, 2008, p. 35.

⁵⁶ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 29.

⁵⁷ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 29.

⁵⁸ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 33.

the text. In spite of that, the meaning of the text is distinguished from the text because that meaning is attributed to the writer. The meaning of the text is the content of the text as it is revealed in various types: the psychological, the social, the political, and the historical. The harmonics of the literary text is an interpretation of the meaning that reader reads in the text.

The person who establishes the meaning is the reader, and the act of establishing the meaning is a way in which the text is identified with, but this meaning differs from the text because the meaning is established in the readers⁵⁹ This leads us to discovering conformity of vision, namely, a similarity in the point of view, in the personality pattern and, partially, in the existential action of the Narrator and the novelist as both of them are Damascene: "Damascus is my childhood city".⁶⁰

With regard to the Title of the novel, *Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of the Honey*, it is necessary, before we deconstruct it, to get through the front cover page to the text of the novel. The narration of the picture corresponds to the narration of the text because the picture represents the human body, though the language in it is the language of the body. The language of the coded picture is the body of the text implication. The cover is a picture of a naked woman who is kneeling on her knees. Nothing at the top of the picture appears except the lower part of her chin and a part of her mouth. In the lower part, the high part of her buttocks appears as it is encircled by a gold chain that is stuck on a thigh of a naked man, and her two hands and all her chest and hair are laid on her back and chest chaotically.

Barthes says: there are some pictures that delighted the writer himself while he was putting the last touches on his book. His pleasure is his fascination, and thus, his enjoyment is fully selfish. The pictures in this state is fundamental because the pleasure of the writer remains a subject of controversy in both word and picture.⁶¹ The words of the Title '*Burhān al-'Asal /The Proof of the Honey*' have some symbolical implication. The Arabic word 'Burhan' means 'proof', and the verb 'barhana' means "proved", according to the dictionary of Sihah al-Razi.⁶² '*Burhān al-'Asal*' means 'proof of the vagina', namely, the 'proof that the vagina introduces versus the male'. When the Narrator meets the other, the man, she says: "I used to arrive wet, and the first thing that he did was to stretch his finger between my legs to check the honey, as he called it, he used to taste it, to kiss me, and to go deeply into my mouth"⁶³.

Salwa al-Nu'aymī worked in *Burhān al-'Asal* on employing the technique of intertextuality from the first line of the novel, between the fictional narrative and the heritage texts, which constituted a colored mosaic that embodied the organic unity in the body of the text. This kind of intertextuality, according to Julia Kristeva, leads to the attempt of undermining the authority of the prohibited, and getting out of it to the authority of the imagined⁶⁴. "al-Janid, who was saying: I need sexual intercourse as I need food; I have an organic need for water and sperm and the words are three; they are my primary elements"⁶⁵. 'Water' is a symbolic sexual gesture, which includes multiplication, fertility, and life, and there is no life without practicing sex and without 'sperm'; the water is the 'sperm'.

As for the narrative structure in the novel, it is based on simple language that often tends to be a colloquial the novel junctures, but it separates that colloquialism when the speech is about the relationship between the Heroine with the Thinker. Then, it moves to a denotative language that is closer to the language of daily life that poets use. Besides, there is no special structure for the characters of the novel.

There are no characters that are independent of the writer. The characters are not lively ones. Actually, they are casual ones that are employed to help the narrating Self and the Thinker in establishing the narrative

⁵⁹ Silverman, G. Hugh, 2002, p. 121

⁶⁰ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 53.

⁶¹ Silverman, G. Hugh, 2002, p. 191.

⁶² al-Rāzī, Mohamad bin Abi Bakir, 1986. P. 21.

⁶³ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 30.

⁶⁴ Kristeva, Julia, 1991, p. 87.

⁶⁵ al-Nu'aymī, Salwa, 2007, p. 52.

structure of the novel. The characters of the novel do not constitute a part of the action, but they emphasize the statement that the writer wants to emphasize in every chapter. When the statement is infinite and is not limited by a beginning and an end, time loses its significance within the work. It is a floating time in the present, an external time if we may say so. Besides, it is no more important for the novel to have a major event in the novel, and this novel is established on making the stories and their connections to personal events function as the spine of the event of the novel.

Summary and Conclusions

The attempts to be acquainted with the body and discover it are not new. They are as old as the human society, including the age of Gilgamesh and Shahrazad, and probably the ancient ages of the images that caveman has left for us. There is no need to remind ourselves of the classical Arabic poetry, and the well-known 'Lamiyya' (= a poem whose lines end with the letter 'I') of the poet Umru' al-Qays. However, the masculine view controlled all the aspects of culture and made the woman a taboo that dangles between contradictions, Satan, and the Angel. She also tempted Adam to eat the 'apple'; she also cut Samson's hair, the source of his power, and nothing remained of her except her womb for giving birth to children, and her vagina, for giving pleasure and service to the male. In short, nothing remained of the woman in the shadow of male culture, except her sanctity.

What has been added to the Arab reader and citizen in this field is the increasing audacity and daring of the Arab women writers to describe the sexual intercourse, and mentioning the sexual organs by their popular names openly and directly, rather than by allusions and circumlocution. Some writers described the man's and woman's sexual organs in an extremely accurate way. More than that, women writers have become more brave to express the working feelings in the soul of the woman writer and her flowing and intimate emotions, her sexual lusts, her admiration and gratitude to what happened and what will happen, the feeling of extreme pleasure that the sexual practices cause, their applause of them and of the desire to repeat them, whether to her or to other females by the man, and their interaction with him in a deep way, whether that man was her husband or her lover, and whether in a legitimate or illegitimate way through open relationships.

There is no doubt that the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* constitutes a significant sign in the culture of the body among contemporary Arabs. *First*, because the novel is introduced by a female; and *second*, it renewed legitimacy to the Arabic Heritage that is related to the body, besides the boldness that characterizes the novel.

Salwa al-Nu'aymī wrote the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* boldly and a witness to that is the open and direct use of exciting and sexual expressions, and her audacity and frankness in expressing her sexual desires and the hidden secrets of her heart and soul, which compelled the Arab censorship to ban publishing and selling the novel.

In addition, Salwa al-Nu'aymī was able in *Burhān al-'Asal* to talk about sex in an atmosphere of joy and delight, without debasement, and she was able to represent the desires and imaginations of the woman without any shame or fakeness. She also succeeded in introducing the living and concrete body, and describing the imbalance between femininity and masculinity, and imbalance between the external and internal movements of the body. She also succeeded in dealing with the dialectic relationship between one body and the other, but failed in criticizing that marginalization and suppression that are exerted on the woman's back, as she failed in seizing the novelistic moments, and the lively narration.

We can consider the novel of *Burhān al-'Asal* as a revival of the classical erotic literature and a modernist manipulation of that heritage. Thus, we find the titles of the chapters as if they were quoted expressions from the classical heritage, e.g.: 'About Learning and Teaching' or 'About Deceit and Circumvention'. However, writing, in my view, mocks that form of writing when it is given to names of one of some chapters such as: 'Sex and the Arab City'.

It is impossible to consider Salwa al-Nu'aymī's *Burhān al-'Asal* an autobiography or a pornographic text. It is simply an unclassified text. However, it is possible to describe it as a sexual novel and a research, together.

The reason for this is that it often cuts the line of narration in order to criticize society or censorship. Thus, this novel is a social and narrative combination that addresses the reader without having feelings of shame or fake decorum. Besides, it is possible to classify the novel as a 'sexual novel' due to the obscene and frank vocabulary and names of the sexual organs and actual sexual intercourse.

In my opinion, *Burhān al-ʿAsal* introduces a fundamental question in our relations with our Arabic language and our Arab heritage. The question is: why do we live this amputated knowledge that violates and poisons our relations even with our bodies, though we have this enormous quantity of heritage books that deal with the issue of 'sex' and 'body'?

Finally, the confusing question that remains unanswered is: Does Salwa al-Nuʿaymī make reconciliation between us and our body?

References

- ʿAbd al-Nor, Idris (2004). *Al-Kitaba al-Nisaʿiya: Hafriya fi al-Ansaq al-Dalla. Al- Unutha, al-Jasad, al-Hawiya*. Al-Maghreb: Maktabat Warraqa: Sigilmasa.
- ʿAffaya, Moḥammad Nour al-Din (1988). *Al-Hawiya wa al-Ikhtilaf fi al-Marʿah wa al-Kitaba wa al-Hamesh*. Al-Dar al-Bayḍaʿ: Afriqya al-Sharq.
- Badr, Fatima (2008). *Khitab al-Marʿa al-ʿIraqiya. Majallat Jadal*. Issue 7-8/January-February.
- Barakat, Najwa (1999). *Al-Marʿah wa al-Kitaba: Ayyat Hurriya. Al-Marʿa wa al-Hurriya: Ayyat Kitaba*. In: *al-Riwaya al-ʿArabiya al-Nisaʿiya: al-Multaqa al-Thalith li al-Mubdiʿat al-ʿArabiya*. Tunisia: Dar Kitabat wa Mahrajan Sousa al-Dawli.
- Barradeh, Moḥammad (1995). *Al-Dhouʿ al-Hareb*. 2nd ed. Ribat: Nashr al-Fanak.
- Barthes, Roland (1992). *Al-Taḥlil al-Bunyawi li al-Sard. Taraʿiq Taḥlil al-Sard al-ʿAdabi*. Tr. Ḥassan Baḥrawi, Bashir al-Qumri, and ʿAbd al-Ḥamid Aqar. Ribat: Manshurat Itiḥad Kutab al-Maghreb.
- Cixous, Helene (1974). "The Character of character". *New Literary History*. Volume V. Volume 42, Number 2.
- Al-Daḡmouni, Moḥammad (1991). *Al-Riwaya al-Maḡrebiya wa al-Taḡayur al-Ijtimaʿi*. al-Dar al-Baya: Afriqya al-Sharq.
- De Beauvoir, Simon. *The Second Sex*. Tr. H.M. Parshley Harmondsworth,
- Derrida, Jacques (2000). *Al-Kitaba wa al-Ikhtilaf*. 2nd ed. Tr. Kazim Jihad. al-Dar al-Bayḍaʿ: Dar Topqal li al-Nashr.
- Al-Ḡaḍami, ʿAbdallah (1998). *Thaqafat al-Wahm: Hawl al-Marʿa wa al-Jasad wa al-Luḡa*. 1st. ed. Al-Dar al-Bayḍaʿ. Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-ʿArabi.
- Irigaray, Luce (1996), "This sex which is not one", in: Jackson, Stevi; Scott, Sue (eds.), *Feminism and sexuality: a reader*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 79–83
- Kiwan, ʿAbd al-ʿAti (2003). *Adab al-Jasad bayna al-Fan wa al-Isfah – Dirasa fi al-Sard al-Nisaʿi*. Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍara al-ʿArabiya.
- Kristeva, Julia (1991). *ʿIlm al-Naṣ*. 1st.ed. Tr. by Farid al-Zahi. Al-Dar al-Baya: al-Dar al-Bayḍaʿ. Topqal li al-Nashr.
- Mustaḡanmi, Aḥlam (1993). *Ḍakirat al-Jasad*. Algeria: al-Muʿasasa al-Wataniya li al-Funun al-Matbaʿiya.
- Al-Nuʿaymī, Salwa (2007). *Burhān al-ʿAsal*. Beirut: Riyaḍ al-Rayyes li al- Tibaʿa wa al-Nashr.
- Morris, Pam (2002). *Al-Adab wa al-Nasawiya*. Tr. Siham ʿAbd al-Salam. 2nd ed. Cairo: al-Majlis al-ʿAla li al-Thaqaf Penguin.1972.
- Al-Raʿi, ʿAli (1979). *Dirasāt fi al-Rywaya al-Miṣriya*. Cairo: al-Hayʿa al-Miṣriya al-ʿAmmā li al-Kitab.
- al-Rāzī, Mohamad Bin Abi Bakir (1986). *Mukhtar al-Ṣiḥah*. Beirut: Maktabat Libnan.
- Robyn R. Warhol, Robyn, Herndl, Diane (1997). *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literate Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick, MJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Selden, Raman (1998). *Al-Nazariya al-ʿAdabiya al-Muʿassera*. Tr. Jaber ʿAsfour. Cairo: Dar Qibaʿ.
- Shuman, Moḥammad Aḥmad (2003). *Qiraʿa fi Itijahat al-Riwaya al-Ḥaditha*. Cairo: al-Ḥayʿah al-Miṣriya al-ʿAmmā li al-Kitab.

-
- Silverman, G. Hugh (2002). *Nassiyat: Bayna al-Harmenewtiqa wa al-Tafkikiya/Textualities between Hermeneutics, and Deconstruction*. 1st. ed. Tr. Hassan Nazim wa 'Ali Hākim Şaleh. Al-Dar al-Bayḍa. Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi.
- Ṭaha, Ibrahim (2006). "Beware Men, They Are All Wild Animals-Arabic Feminist- Challenge, Fight and Repudiation". *Al-Karmil*. Studies in Arabic Language and Literature 27, pp. 25-71.
- Teebs, Yousef (2009). "Tatawur Mafhoum al-Jasad". *Majallat Alam al-Fikr*. Issue 4, Vol. 37. April-June. On: <https://www.dw.com/ar>. Article: al-Jins fi Adab al-Katibat al-'Arabiyat: Waqi' am Khayal? An interview conducted by Reem Najami in Qunaytera with novelist: Salwa al-Nu'aymī. Republished in: *Jareedat al-Watan al-'Iraqiya*, Issue 27.
- Todorov, Tzfitan (1992). *Al-Shi'riya*. Tr. Shukri al-Manjut and Raja' bin Salameh. Al-Dar al-Bayḍa ': Dar Topqal.
-